City of Chicago
24th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Interfaith Breakfast

"Keeping the Dream Alive –
Empowering Our Youth"

January 15, 2010

Invocation
John Buchanan, Pastor
The Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago

We cannot be together this morning and not pray for the people of Haiti.

"Let justice roll down like waters," your prophet Amos said, "righteousness like an everflowing stream."

"What does the lord require of you" your prophet Hosea said, "but to do

justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God."

"When you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers . . . when you find your tongue twisted as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park and see tears welling up when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see the depressing clouds of inferiority begin to form in her little mental sky . . . when you are forever fighting a denigrating sense of 'nobodiness,' then you will understand why we can't wait" your prophet Martin said.

"I have a dream . . .

your prophet, our brother Martin said.

Almighty God, we thank you that you planted deep in the human heart the sense that every woman, every man, every child is created in your image, created with the promise of a generous world and a just society.

We thank you that deep in the human heart is a longing for justice, for that time when every woman and man and child is honored and protected, is secure and safe, and has the opportunity to become all that God created her or him to become.

We thank you for creating impatience in us, and anger when the promise of your creation is denied or neglected.

We thank you for the courage of people who have marched and protested, sat-in, endured water cannons, physical violence, prison - people who have died for that dream.

We thank you for preachers and professors, scholars and lawmakers, who have worked to right wrongs of discrimination, and to make your dream for your creation a reality.

O God, keep us from complacency. We have come a long way - and we have a long way to go. Make us impatient.

Make us righteously angry when justice is denied.

Give us strength and tenacity for the tasks that remain to realize your dream of a just and compassionate world.

We thank you, O God, for public officials, for our President, our Senators and representatives, our Governor and state officials, and for our Mayor.

Bless them all with gifts of wisdom and patience and strength and a passion for justice.

We thank you for Martin Luther King, Jr. - who inspired us, and led us. For his eloquence, his unbending

determination, his courage and his dream which we know is your dream, your will.

And for one another, for this occasion, for the food we are about to eat, we give you thanks. In your holy name we pray.

Amen

This has social and political as well as personal implications. The urban

crisis we face and which continues to deepen - is a generation (two generations actually, now becoming three generations) of undervalued people, who live lives of desperate poverty and hopelessness, whose only recourse seems to be drugs to anesthetize or make money in the absence of viable employment opportunities, and the guns and violent crime that inevitably come along too.

In his famous *Letter from the Birmingham Jail* which he wrote more than four decades ago, Martin Luther King responded to white ministers who asked him to slow down and not press so insistently and stubbornly for equality and justice. "Can't you be patient?" the ministers asked King. He

wrote . . . “When you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers . . . when you find your tongue twisted as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can’t go to the public amusement park and see tears welling up when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see the depressing clouds of inferiority begin to form in her little mental sky . . . when you are forever fighting a denigrating sense of ‘nobodiness,’ then you will understand” why we can’t wait

A denigrating sense of “nobodiness” . . . at the heart of Martin Luther King’s leadership of the Civil Rights Movement was not only a passion for social and political justice based on

the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, but a deeply held theological conviction, a deeply held Biblical truth, that human beings, every human being, regardless of color, race, station in life, nationality, income, sexual orientation – every human being is a child of God: everyone called by name, Precious, Beloved.